



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

September, 2006

To the Citizens of Wisconsin:

It is my pleasure to present the Department of Public Instruction's education agenda for the 2007-09 biennium. These proposals support our *New Wisconsin Promise* to ensure a quality education for every child and close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students, students of color and their peers. We must be committed to public education as the foundation of democracy and economic security in Wisconsin in an increasingly competitive global economy.

There is no better investment to be made than in the education of our children. We have some of the best schools and educators in the nation, yet the state of quality education in Wisconsin is threatened. From our largest urban to our smallest rural school districts, there is a rising inequity in educational opportunity for our children.

Districts around the state have been cutting programs and eliminating services. Educational opportunities are being limited as cuts hit the classrooms at the same time we are increasing accountability for student achievement. The 14th year of state-imposed revenue caps impacts the capacity of all districts, especially those with declining enrollment. As we are all aware, operational costs continue to rise with escalating fuel costs directly resulting in higher transportation, power, and heating bills.

Increased costs, increased poverty, and, most of all, revenue caps are limiting our ability to offer all children the same educational opportunities across our state. Increasingly, it does matter where you live in our state as to the educational opportunities your child receives.

This is a budget that maintains the state's commitment to fund two-thirds of school costs, protecting local property taxpayers. It makes additional investments in our students with special needs and the growing population with limited English proficiency. It targets funds toward global literacy and career skills. It continues and enhances my *Advancing Rural Wisconsin* initiative to support our rural schools. It focuses new ideas in Milwaukee and strengthens our SAGE and P-5 class-size reduction programs. It enhances our vital public library network. It builds on our statewide quality teacher and early childhood education efforts and makes investments in nutrition and after-school programs. And, the devoted people who educate our children every day deserve no less than the repeal of the QEO.

We must move public education forward into the 21st century. We must come together answering the call to service and sustain the hopes and dreams of our children. Together we can make our schools work for all children, wherever they may live, in our great state of Wisconsin.

We at the department look forward to working with you, the Governor and Legislature to bring these proposals to fruition, to build on our successes and truly ensure a quality education for every child.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent